

Drawn into two which way home? - The Installation

Drawn into Two, Which Way Home? is an immersive, experiential installation that explores the enduring impact and intergenerational trauma of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan. Through an interdisciplinary blend of photography, textiles, spatial design, and sensory elements, the installation invites audiences to engage with stories of displacement, memory, trauma, and identity that continue to shape lives across South Asia and beyond.

The installation unfolds across three interconnected spaces, inviting the viewer to move physically through the work.

The installation begins with a portrait of a woman printed onto silk fabric and physically cut into two parts, with barbed wire placed on either side. As the viewer moves forward, they physically part the two sections of the fabric (by splitting the face into two) entering a space where a single small photograph occupies one wall while the rest of the room remains empty.

From this threshold, the viewer turns right and enters a dark space with portraits of Partitioned families, printed on silk fabric and suspended in the air throughout the room. Within this dark space, the words 'This is the way home', printed on one of the walls, serves as a directional gesture. It leads the viewer deeper into the installation, passing through these hanging fabrics and into another space where photographic prints are exhibited on the walls.

Here, the photographs intertwine with audio and movement. Sensors embedded in the floor respond to the presence and movement of the viewer, activating an audio piece. Conceived as an audio film, the work unfolds as a narrative while the viewer looks through the photographs, transforming the act of looking into an immersive, embodied experience.

As the viewer moves ahead, they enter the final space. An intensely bright, white space dominated by two large, 20-foot mirrors facing one another. This otherwise plain white room is interrupted by a quotation on Partition from Harvard University, written across the left hand side wall. Across the floor, a web of red crocheted threads interrupts the walking space. As visitors move through it, their feet become entangled in the threads, slowing their movement and forcing them to carefully negotiate the space. Looking up, they encounter their own reflection repeated infinitely between the opposing mirrors.

This physical entanglement becomes a metaphor for inherited histories and trauma. It asks viewers to confront how, seventy-nine years after Partition, many of the divisions and conflicts that shaped our history continue to resonate in the present, including communalism, religious extremism, terrorism, displacement, and unresolved grief. The mirrors collapse the distance between history and the present. The viewer no longer encounters only the faces of those who experienced Partition. Instead, they encounter themselves within an apparently endless continuum, prompting a reflection on how the traumas of Partition are carried across generations, and how they continue to shape lives on both sides of the border.

By blurring the boundaries between documentary and experiential art, *Drawn into Two, Which Way Home?* transforms historical testimony into a present-day reflection, prompting questions about home, identity, belonging, and the ways in which we carry the past forward.